However, OMCs had reported backlog in LPG supplies in certain States in the country due to a combination of factors *viz.*, reduction in supply of bulk LPG compared to the target by Reliance Industries Limited (RIL) & Essar Oil Limited in January-February, 2008, delay in movement of bulk LPG by rail from Jamnagar to the Northern Region, increased demand in the States due to severe cold which resulted in panic booking by the customers, strikes by contract labour, agitational activities, delays in berthing of vesels at Haldia Port due to reduced draft, bandhs etc.

Government had advised OMCs to liquidate the backlog in the country by operating the bottling plants on holidays and during extended hours. Increased bottling is also done during the working days for early clearance of backlog.

At present, OMCs have not reported any backlog in supply of LPG in the country. OMCs are monitoring the situation on a day to day basis and corrective action is being taken whenever required.

(d) No, Sir.

(e) Does not arise in view of (d) above.

Gas from Panna-Mukta-Tapti fields

3827. SHRI SANJAY RAUT: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Power Ministry has demanded for nearly half the quantity of gas from Panna-Mukta-Tapti fields for producing more power to meet countrywide power shortage;

(b) if so, what is Government's reaction thereto; and

(c) what are the barriers for accepting power Ministry's legitimate demand?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (c) The demand for natural gas in the country is more than the availability. However, priority is being given to supply of natural gas to power plants, including from PMT fields. The power plants located along Hazira-Vijaipur-Jagdishpur/ex-Hazira (HVJ/ex-Hazira) are being supplied a total quantity of 2.25 million standard cubic meters per day (mmscmd) natural gas from PMT fields at Administered Price Mechanism (APM) price. Further, 1.5 mmscmd is being supplied to Rajasthan Rajya Vidyut Utpadan Nigam Limited (RRVUNL). 0.90 mmscmd would be supplied to Torrent Power Limited. So total supply to power sector from PMT fields would be 4.65 mmscmd.

LPG connections for women under BPL

3828. SHRI M.V. MYSURA REDDY: Will the Minister of PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government has formulated any policy regarding domestic LPG connections to the women under below poverty line in the country with a view to reduce dependence on forest for firewood and improve their helath status;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) if not, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF PETROLEUM AND NATURAL GAS (SHRI DINSHA J. PATEL): (a) to (d) No, Sir. There is no restriction for release of new LPG connections for genuine domestic customers, including women under Below Poverty Line (BPL) in the country. Public Sector Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have released Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG) connections to BPL familes, including women, as per requests recevied/Schemes launched in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Chhatisgarh, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Mizoram, Sikkim, Tamil Nadu and Union Territory of Puducherry. The security deposits for the equipment in such cases have been borne by the respective State Governments. However, there is no separate allocation for women in these schemes.

OMCs have introduced 5 kg domestic LPG cylinders with effect from August 2002 in order to meet the demand of low-income groups in urban, semi-urban and rural pockets and also extend the reach of LPG to the hilly terrain and interior areas in the country on account of convenience in transportation.

Government have given freedom to OMCs to set up LPG distributorships in accordance with their commercial assessment and locations are identified by them on the basis of available refill sale potential for sustaining an independent distributorship. Government have advised OMCs to draw up Marketing Plan for covering semi-urban and rural areas. OMCs have finalized 1340 locations in the country for setting up of new LPG distributorship mainly in rural and urban-rural (semi-urban) locations. The advertisements for the same have been released.

Foreign exchange earnings from tourists

3829. SHRI JESUDASU SEELAM: Will the Minister of TOURISM be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to quality of method of calculation, foreign exchange earnings from tourists have been under estimated in the last three years;

(b) whether this has resulted in under valuation of the contribution of Tourism Department to the exchequer;

(c) whether according to the revised calculations, India earned US$ 9.6 billion from foreign tourists till November, 2007;

(d) whether to correct anomaly, the Ministry adopted a new methodology and used Consumer Price Index figures instead of wholesale Price Index being used now;

(e) what is the latest earnings from tourism; and

(f) what steps considered to improve the tourist earnings further?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF TOURISM (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) to (e) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) gives preliminary quarterly estimates of Foreign Exchange Earnings (FEE) from tourism with a time lag of 3 months and provisionally revised estimates with a time lag of about 6 months. However, Ministry of Tourism (MOT) prepares monthly advance estimate of FEE from tourism with a time lag of one week.

The methodology earlier followed for estimating the FEE from tourism for a particular month was based on the following main inputs:—